

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
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AMEMBASSY LAGOS PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, AO, CG

SUBJECT: BORDER ATTACK ON ZAIRE - U.S. PRESS TREATMENT
MARCH 24

1. FOLLOWING PARAS GIVE SYNOPSIS U.S. PRESS TREATMENT OF
EVENTS IN ZAIRE.

2. WASHINGTON POST:

-- REPORTING ON VANCE'S APPEARANCE BEFORE THE SENATE FOR-
EIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE YESTERDAY, MURREY MARDER SAID
VANCE RAISED HOPES THAT MEDIATION BY NIGERIA IN THE FIGHT-
ING IN ZAIRE MAY BE ABLE TO RESOLVE THE SERIOUS PROBLEM
THAT CONFLICT HAS RAISED FOR THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION.
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MARDER OBSERVES THAT IF NIGERIA IS SUCCESSFUL DIPLOMATI-
CALLY IN MEDIATING THE CONFLICT, ANGOLA WOULD EXPECT THE
U.S. TO MOVE TOWARD NORMALIZING RELATIONS WITH IT. SENATOR
CLARK SAID, "THIS NIGERIAN INITIATIVE IS EXTREMELY IMPOR-
TANT....IT WOULD BE A VERY POOR POLICY FOR US TO BECOME
ANY MORE DEEPLY INVOLVED IN ZAIRE THROUGH A (FURTHER) SHIP-
MENT OF SUPPLIES UNTIL WE SEE WHAT THIS NIGERIAN INITIATIVE

BRINGS ABOUT."

-- VILLAGERS IN SHABA APPEAR TO BE WELCOMING THE INVADERS,

ACCORDING TO ROBIN WRIGHT, WHO WRITES THAT THE CURRENT TENSIONS REFLECT THE DEPTH OF ONE OF THE BIGGEST PROBLEMS ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT -- TRIBALISM. THE LUNDA TRIBE, WHICH DOMINATES THE SOUTHEASTERN SECTION OF ZAIRE, IS FIERCELY INDEPENDENT. IT HAS OPPOSED THE GOVERNMENT SINCE INDEPENDENCE AND HAS NEVER RECOGNIZED ZAIRE'S NATIONAL BOUNDARIES.

3. NEW YORK TIMES:

-- MICHAEL KAUFMAN QUOTES OFFICIAL ZAIRIAN SPOKESMAN AS SAYING THAT TWO ZAIRIAN MIRAGE JETS DROPPED FOUR TONS OF BOMBS ON KISENGE YESTERDAY. KISENGE WAS IDENTIFIED AS THE MILITARY HEADQUARTERS OF THE KATANGAN INVADERS. IN RELATED DEVELOPMENTS, NIGERIA ASKED THE U.S. AND THE USSR NOT TO SUPPLY WEAPONS THAT COULD LEAD TO A SPREAD OF FIGHTING IN ZAIRE.

4. BALTIMORE SUN:

-- THE SUN'S WASHINGTON BUREAU REPORTED ON NIGERIA'S AGREEMENT TO ACT AS PEACEMAKER IN ZAIRIAN SITUATION. THE ARTICLE STATES THAT THE NIGERIAN DECISION OFFERED SEVERAL POLITICAL BENEFITS TO THE U.S. -- FOR ONE THING IT REPRESENTS AN IMPROVEMENT IN U.S./NIGERIAN RELATIONS, AND MAY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MAKE IT UNNECESSARY FOR THE U.S. TO SEND COMBAT ARMS TO ZAIRE. THE ARTICLE CONCLUDES THAT THE U.S. STANCE TOWARD ZAIRE IS BEING WATCHED CLOSELY BY SOME OTHER GOVERNMENTS AS AN INDICATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S SKILL AT CRISIS MANAGEMENT.

-- ACCORDING TO AP TWO ZAIRE AIR FORCE MIRAGE JETS DROPPED 4 TONS OF BOMBS YESTERDAY ON KISENGE, WHICH IS LOCATED 300 MILES WEST OF THE SHABA COPPER MINING CENTER OF KOLWEZI. GOVERNMENT SOURCES ARE QUOTED AS SAYING THAT KISENGE HAD BECOME THE OPERATIONAL HEADQUARTERS AND MAJOR SUPPLY CENTER FOR THE EXILE KATANGESE SECESSIONISTS.

-- AP REPORTS FROM LONDON THAT CONCERN THAT THE STRIFE IN ZAIRE AND RHODESIA COULD REDUCE AFRICAN COPPER EXPORTS, HAS CAUSED COPPER PRICES TO RISE RAPIDLY ON THE LONDON METAL MARKET IN THE PAST MONTH.

VANCE

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